

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7416

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AMEMBASSY CARACAS

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TAGS: ELAB PINS ENRG TD

SUBJECT: RALLY OF OIL AND SUGAR WORKERS

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1. THE FOUR CHIEF RADICAL LABOR LEADERS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO GEORGE WEEKES, BASDEO PANDAY, RAFFIQUE SHAH, AND JOE YOUNG - ADDRESSED A LARGE ALL-DAY RALLY OF THE UNITED LABOUR FRONT IN SAN FERNANDO ON FEBRUARY 18. THE RALLY SERVED AS A PLATFORM FOR THESE LEADERS TO PLEDGE SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE WORKERS IN OIL AND SUGAR IN ACHIEVING THE SPECIFIC AIMS OF EACH ORGANIZATION AS WELL AS TO STRESS THE LONG-TERM POLITICAL OBJECTIVES OF THE ULF. THE SPEAKERS ALSO RE-STATED THE FAMILIAR ANTI-GOVERNMENT, ANTI-MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION, NATIONALISTIC IDEAS AND CHARGES WHICH ARE A FEATURE OF SUCH MEETINGS. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEETING, THE SEVEN-DAY POSTPONEMENT OF THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN TEXACO AND THE OILFIELD WORKERS TRADE UNION (OWTU) WAS REPORTED IN REF A. OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST FROM THE MEETING ARE REPORTED BELOW.

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2. OWTU PRESIDENT GENERAL GEORGE WEEKES CHARGED THAT THE U.S. WAS SERIOUSLY PLANNING TO INVADE OIL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES WHICH CUT OFF DELIVERIES OF OIL TO THE U.S. AND THAT IT WOULD USE TRINIDAD AS A BASE TO LAUNCH AN INVASION OF VENEZUELA. HE ATTACKED PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS FOR INVITING MORE MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATIONS, PARTICULARLY AMERICAN, TO EXPLOIT TRINIDAD. HE WONDERED WHY PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS HAD TRAVELED HALF WAY AROUND THE WORLD TO ARRANGE FOR OIL DELIVERIES FROM INDONESIA WHICH WAS RUN BY "CRIMINALS WHO HAD MURDURED THOUSANDS OF COMMUNISTS" WHEN HE REFUSED TO MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT OF NEIGHBORING VENEZUELA WHICH HAS AMPLE OIL TO SELL. COMMENTING ON THE INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST TEXACO OFFICIALS RECENTLY, THE OWTU LEADER SAID THAT THE BEATINGS OF THE LABOR OFFICER AND THE COMPANY POLICEMAN WERE THE RESULTS OF MEMBERS HAVING DECIDED TO TAKE "MILITANT ACTION" IN A SPECIFIC DISPUTE AND BOASTED THAT, DUE TO THE UNION'S SOLIDARITY, THE COMPANY COULD NOT DISCIPLINE THE MEN. HE BLAMED THE FIRE-BOMBINGS (REF B) ON "MAFIA AGENTS WORKING FOR THE CIA" TO STIR UP TROUBLE FOR THE UNION.

3. IN HIS SPEECH TO THE MEETING, PRESIDENT GENERAL OF THE ALL TRINIDAD SUGAR WORKERS UNION BASDEO PANDAY SAID THAT HIS UNION HAD REACHED AGREEMENT WITH THE CARONI SUGAR GROWING AND MANUFACTURING COMPANY ON A PACKAGE WAGE DEAL WITH AN AVERAGE INCREASE IN PAY OF 100 PERCENT OVER THREE YEARS BUT THAT HE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE NEW CONTRACT WERE NOW DEADLOCKED ON THE QUESTIONS OF IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS AND A PROFIT SHARING PLAN. PANDAY OUTLINED HIS PLANS FOR THE WORKERS TO TAKE OVER OWNERSHIP OF THE SUGAR INDUSTRY AND FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF INTEGRATED FACTORIES WHICH COULD PROCESS FOOD AS WELL AS SUGAR. THIS WOULD, HE SAID, ENABLE THE COMPANY TO CREATE MORE JOBS IN FOOD GROWING AND PROCESSING AND WOULD PROVIDE AN ALTERNATIVE USE FOR THE LAND WHEN SUGAR PRICES WERE LOW. PANDAY ALSO PLEDGED THAT HIS MEMBERS WOULD NOT HANDLE CANE GROWN BY INDEPENDENT CANE FARMERS UNTIL THE DISPUTES INVOLVING THE ICFTU WERE RESOLVED TO THAT ORGANIZATION'S SATISFACTION.

4. ICFTU PRESIDENT RAFFIQUE SHAH TERMED THE RULING THAT THE MAIN PARTS OF THE CANE FARMERS INCORPORATION AND CESS ACT

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WERE UNCONSTITUTIONAL A SMALL VICTORY FOR THE ICFTU (IN FACT, THE ICFTU PLAYED NO DIRECT ROLE IN THE LEGAL PROCEEDINGS) WHICH WAS DUE TO THE MILITANCY OF THE CANE FARMERS. HE CAUTIONED THAT IF THE ICFTU DID NOT PRESS ON NOW FOR REPEAL OF THE ACT AND FULL RECOGNITION FOR THE UNION, AN APPEAL COURT WOULD LIKELY OVERTURN THE INITIAL DECISION. SHAH PLEDGED THAT THE ICFTU WOULD CONTINUE ITS NO-CUT CAMPAIGN UNTIL IT WON RECOGNITION AND ALL OF ITS OTHER DEMANDS --

AN INCREASED FINAL PAYMENT FOR THE 1974 CROP, A HIGHER FIRST INTERIM PAYMENT FOR THIS YEAR'S CANE AND ABANDONMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PLAN TO IMPOSE A LEVY ON THE PROFITS MADE ON EXPORT SUGAR.

5. DR. JAMES MILLETTE, A RADICAL LECTURER AT THE ST. AUGUSTINE CAMPUS OF UWI AND LEADER OF THE MINISCULE UNITED NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE PARTY, WAS PRESENT ON THE PLATFORM IN HIS CAPACITY AS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE ICFTU BUT DID NOT SPEAK. MEMBERS OF THE TAPIA GROUP, INCLUDING SENATOR HAMLET JOSEPH, WERE ALSO IN EVIDENCE AT THE MEETING, SELLING COPIES OF THE TAPIA NEWSPAPER WHICH CONTAINED THE GROUP'S POSITION ON THE OWTU-TEXACO NEGOTIATIONS.
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